

Message Text

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PAGE 01 VIENTI 00341 140930Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 SP-02 INR-10
CIAE-00 /057 W

-----098545 141433Z /43

R 140715Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9113
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMCONSUL UDORN
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 0341

BANGKOK ALSO PASS UDORN ELECTRICALLY

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS SOCI PDEV MOPS LA
SUBJECT: SECURITY CONDITIONS IN SAVANNAKHET PROVINCE

REF A VIENTIANE 0324, B VIENTIANE 0130

1. A WESTERN BUSINESSMAN WHO TRAVELED TO SAVANNAKHET RECENTLY AS THE AGENT FOR SWEDISH AID (SIDA) TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER MARCH 12 THAT THE PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES THERE COMPLAINED TO HIM OF WORSENING SECURITY CONDITIONS. HE SAID THAT HE WENT TO SAVANNAKHET WITH A MAJOR IN THE SWEDISH ARMY WHO WANTED TO INSPECT THE PROSPECTIVE CONSTRUCTION SITES ALONG ROUTE 9 FOR THE BAILEY BRIDGES DONATED BY THE SWEDISH GOVERNMENT. THE SAVANNAKHET PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES AND THE LAO PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY OFFICIALS WOULD NOT ALLOW THE MAJOR TO TRAVEL ALONG ROUTE 9 BECAUSE IT WAS TOO DANGEROUS.

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THEY WERE STRICTLY CONFINED TO THEIR HOTEL ROOM UNLESS ACCOMPANIED BY AN ARMY GUARD.

2. A FRENCH WOMAN RESIDENT IN SAVANNAKHET TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER MARCH 11 THAT SEVERAL LAO IN SAVANNAKHET HAD TOLD HER THAT MOST OF THE VIETNAMESE TROOPS STATIONED IN SAVANNAKHET PROVINCE HAD MOVED TO THE LAO-

KAMPUCHEAN BORDER REGION ABOUT THREE MONTHS AGO. SHE SAID THAT DURING THE PAST THREE MONTHS SHE HAS SEEN FEWER VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS IN THE SAVANNAKHET MARKET WHEN FORMERLY THERE WERE MANY. SHE SAID THAT SHE WAS PERMITTED TO GO ANYWHERE WITHIN THE CITY LIMITS BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

3. A DUTCH AGRONOMIST WHO TRAVELED TO SAVANNAKHET DURING THE SECOND WEEK OF MARCH TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER MARCH 11 THAT HE HAD BEEN ESCORTED BY THE LAO ARMY TO SENO AIRBASE WHERE HE BOUGHT A PLANE BACK TO VIENTIANE. HE SAID THAT HE RECOGNIZED NO VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS AT SENO. THE SOURCE ALLOWED THAT HE MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A LAO AND A VIETNAMESE SOLDIER BUT THAT, IN ANY CASE, HE SAW VERY FEW SOLDIERS AT ALL. HE ALSO SAID THAT HE DID NOT SEE MIG-21 AIRCRAFT. (TEN MIG'S WERE REPORTED TO BE STATIONED AT SENO, REF A.)

4. COMMENT: RESISTANCE ACTIVITY IN SAVANNAKHET PROVINCE IS LIKELY TO INCREASE FOR TWO REASONS. FIRST, THERE IS A SERIOUS FOOD SHORTAGE IN SAVANNAKHET (REF A) WHICH OFTEN LEADS TO SOCIAL UNREST AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT SENTIMENT. IT IS LIKELY, THEREFORE, THAT PEASANT SUPPORT FOR THE RESISTANCE WOULD INCREASE. SECOND, PARA 2 AND 3 SUPPORT THE EARLIER REPORT (REF B) THAT
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SRV TROOPS MOVED FROM THE SENO BASE IN SAVANNAKHET TO THE LAO/KAMPUCHEAN BORDER REGION. THERE MAY BE FEWER SRV TROOPS IN SAVANNAKHET NOW TO "MAINTAIN SECURITY."
CHAMBERLIN

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NNN

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